any hard and fast laws. The surgical treatment of epilepsy by excision of the involved cortex is still in its infancy. We can only urge upon the physician to submit his cases to this treatment, if at all, early, and before his patient is a subject of the epileptic habit.

There are cases on record in which there has been a focal epilepsy or localized spasms, in which the cortex governing the part has been excised, no demonstrable lesion found, and perfect cure from the fits or spasms has resulted.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Prevention of Sexual Diseases. By Victor G. Vecki, M. D. Introduction by William J. Robertson, M. D. The Critic and Guide Company, New York.

The menace of the increasing spread of veneral diseases to the welfare of the community has in recent years been the subject of considerable attention. All who have made a study of the sociological aspects of the question agree that existing conditions demand radical measures with a view to immediate amelioration if not eradication of this appalling social evil. Since the appearance of syphilis in Europe more than five centuries ago, various measures have been tried for its limitation. The prostitute has been burned, and her profession has been officially recognized and officially regulated; the religionist, the moralist and the medical man have made excursions to this rough country where Nature has been challenged, but still remains unchanged. The result in all instances has been the same—failure. Seeking a solution to this intricate problem in measures which attacked only the more or less obvious manifestations of the evil, ethical reformers have from the first been doomed to disappointment and failure. It is evident as Duclaux says that a fight against veneral diseases will only be possible when we can arrive at the point of view that the sufferers are not guilty, but unfortunate. Obviously, then, the first vital step in an effective campaign clearly lies in the direction of education not only in matters of sexual diseases, but of the biological significance of the sexual instinct, and the physiology of sex itself.

It is with such a broad and keen realization of the practical side of the problem that the writer presents his book on a subject the discussion of which has often been a venturesome undertaking. To boldly and frankly present the facts has been the object of the author, and it must be admitted that he has done so clearly and in good perspective. He thoroughly agrees with most Continental writers that for the present at least it is impossible to eradicate the institution of prostitution, and that it would be well to continue as in Europe official supervision, notwithstanding its failure in remedying the evil which has continued to thrive unabated. The government's duty toward the prevention of venereal diseases is also well presented, and the physician's duty in the practical solution of the problem is very properly accentuated. Taken as a whole, the author has given us a very readable and intelligent résumé of one of the most urgent social problems confronting society to-day. We commend the work to the physician and layman as a first step in education regarding the subject.

Edema. By Martin H. Fischer. John Wiley & Sons, New York and London. 1910.

"A Study of the Physiology and the Pathology of water absorption by the living organism." In this volume Dr. Martin H. Fischer elaborates the theory of the nature of edema that he has long advocated, and which ought to be better known among the rank and file of the medical profession than is at present the case. If his deductions are finally verified they will have clinical and therapeutical bearings of the utmost practical importance. Never has a colossal superstructure been based on a simpler statement of facts. A piece of gelatin placed in water swells up to a certain point and stops. If acid is added to the water it swells very much more, if the acid is removed it shrinks. These properties have long been known, and are the basis of certain technical procedures, such as the Bromoil process in photography. It remained for Dr. Fischer to see that in this property of a colloid to absorb water unequally, according to the chemical contents of the latter, lays the probable explanation of the physical mechanism of growth and secretion, and incidentally of the pathological state of edema.

To briefly summarize the thesis set forth in the book it is shown that the living body consists chiefly of water and colloids. That these colloids have definite and individually different saturation points for pure water. That these saturation points are enormously extended by the addition of acid to the water, varying with the acid used. That these water swollen colloids release the absorbed water when perfused with certain salts (commonly present in the body), that the force of the attraction of a colloid for water and consequent increase in its mass is capable of producing powerful mechanical effects—all these points are amply verified by numerous experiments. Thence is deduced the argument that the living body may be regarded as a mass of mixed colloids associated with water, according to their natural affinity for water, modified by the presence of acids and neutral salts. Where the acids prevail water absorption is in excess, where salts dominate water is released. We thus have a physical mechanism for the movement of the water through the organism that is independent of the organs of circulation. Water moves to areas of acid production, and from areas of salt (various salts) concentration. The vascular apparatus may facilitate but is not the cause of such movements or conditions. The blood consists of water saturated colloid. Furthermore, the mechanical force set free in such movements greatly exceeds that exerted by the mechanism of the heart. For example, the colloids in an ox-eye will swell in acidulated water and easilv rupture the strong sclerotic coat. This is a force far greater than any the contracting heart can exert. Again as each cell contains more than one colloid, and the distribution varies with organs and tissues, even between cell and cell, according to age and activity, so we have with each variation a cause for movements of water and constantly changing stresses and adjustments. Lastly, as every movement of water involves a transference of its dissolved matter so we have in such movements (determined by colloidal attractions or repulsions) a satisfactory explanation of the mechanism of secretion and excretion. It is obvious that we have in this conception the wide and sufficing simplicity of a fundamental hypothesis. Like the great theories of natural science, the atomic, Darwinian, Nebular, etc., it in its smaller field covers and correlates a vast assemblage of isolated phenomena. Whether it will explain all the author believes it to do, is yet to be seen. To the writer of this critique the subject of edema seems but a minor phase of Dr. Fischer's generalization. In fact the caption is an unfortunate one for the book is in no sense a treatise on edema. Such a work would have demanded of its author a full, if critical, review of the past and current work of others